

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

OMB-01 AID-05 /084 W

----- 110720

R 151010Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5443

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LA

SUBJ: INDEPENDENCE DAY FOR SOUVANNA PHOUMA

REF: A) VIENTIANE 5927

B) VIENTIANE 5947

C) FBIS BK 111700Y SEP 75

1. WHILE THE MAIN CEREMONIES CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAO ISSARA'S PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE WERE TAKING PLACE IN VIENG SAY AND VIENTIANE, THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL FIGURE IN LAOS DURING THOSE 30 YEARS, PRIME MINISTER PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA, REMAINED IN LUANG PRABANG WHERE HE HAD GONE OSTENSIBLY TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EARLY OCTOBER CEREMONIAL OPENING OF THE JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL
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SESSION, BUT WHERE, IN FACT, HE HAD BEEN HUSTLED BY THE

NEW LEADERS OF LAOS SO AS TO PREVENT HIS PARTICIPATING IN THE VIENTIANE CELEBRATION. THE PRINCE'S ONLY PART IN THE FESTIVAL WAS A SHORT "RADIO SPEECH" READ BY AN ANNOUNCER ON OCTOBER 11.

2. IN HIS SPEECH (REF C), SOUVANNA REVIEWED, IN A DISJOINTED WAY, THE 30-YEAR STRUGGLE WITH NUMEROUS CRITICAL REFERENCES TO "OLD COLONIALISTS" AND "NEO-COLONIALIST IMPERIALISTS" WITHOUT IN THE PROCESS NAMING EITHER FRANCE OR THE UNITED STATES, OR INCIDENTALLY MENTIONING HIS OWN COOPERATION WITH BOTH OF THOSE NATIONS. HE ALSO TRIED TO CLIMB ON THE LIBERATION BANDWAGON BY MENTIONING HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE OCTOBER 12, 1945 INDEPENDENCE CEREMONY AND IN THE "STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DOMINATION, OPPRESSION AND INTIMIDATION OF THE IMPERIALIST AGGRESSORS."

3. COMMENT: THE PRIME MINISTER'S NON-PARTICIPATION IN THE CELEBRATION AT VIENG SAY OR VIENTIANE AND HIS PLAINTIVE SPEECH ALL SERVE TO UNDERLINE THE FACT THAT EVENTS IN LAOS HAVE PASSED HIM BY. HE HAD A MAJOR ROLE IN THE FEBRUARY 1973 AGREEMENT AND IN HOLDING TOGETHER THE COALITION WHILE THE VIENTIANE SIDE WAS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. HOWEVER, NOW THAT THE VIENTIANE SIDE HAS CEASED TO EXIST AND THE LAO PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IS IN FIRM CONTROL, THE PRINCE HAS NO REAL ROLE. HE WILL PROBABLY BE KEPT AROUND UNTIL THE APRIL 1976 ELECTIONS WHEN HE WILL PRESUMABLY BE ALLOWED TO RETIRE TO HIS FRENCH ESTATE. THE LAO PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS OWE HIM A DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR THE RESPONSIBLE AND INTELLIGENT ROLE HE PLAYED IN THE PAST 30 YEARS, THOUGH WITH THE LPRP BUSY REWRITING HISTORY HE MAY ONLY BE REMEMBERED IN A FOOTNOTE AS AN ELDER HALF-BROTHER OF PRINCE SOUHANOUVONG WHO HELD POWER UNDER THE "IMPERIALISTS" BUT LATER COOPERATED WITH THE "LIBERATION."
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI05950
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750357-0447
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751053/aaaabvIv.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 VIENTIANE 5927
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDEPENDENCE DAY FOR SOUVANNA PHOUMA
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LA, (SOUVANNA PHOUMI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006